

# **HM PRISON BLANTYRE HOUSE**



## **ANNUAL REPORT**

**1 JULY 2011 – 30 JUNE 2012**

# **HMP BLANTYRE HOUSE**

## **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD**

**1 JULY 2011 – 30 JUNE 2012**

### **SECTION ONE**

#### **STATUTORY ROLE OF THE IMB**

The Prisons Act 1952 and the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 require every prison and IRC to be monitored by an Independent Board appointed by the Secretary of State from members of the community in which the prison or centre is situated.

The Board is specifically charged to:

- satisfy itself as to the humane and just treatment of those held in custody within its prison and the range and adequacy of the programmes preparing them for release
- inform promptly the Secretary of State, or any official to whom he has delegated authority, as it judges appropriate, any concerns it has; and
- report annually to the Secretary of State on how well the prison has met the standards and requirements placed on it and what impact these have on those in its custody.

To enable the Board to carry out these duties effectively its members have right of access to every prisoner and every part of the prison and to the prison's records.

## SECTION TWO

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## **SECTION THREE**

### **DESCRIPTION OF THE PRISON**

- 3.1 Blantyre House is a category C/D semi-open prison. Since January 2008 the prison has been jointly managed with the resettlement open prison and young offenders' institution for women at East Sutton Park (ESP).
- 3.2 The establishment's Certified Normal Accommodation (CNA) is 122. Men must meet Blantyre House's criteria for acceptance, namely, no adjudications in the six months prior to transfer, and no convictions for arson, sex offences or terrorism. The prison is always at or close to full occupancy and accommodation is provided in 116 single rooms and 3 doubles.
- 3.3 The house block also accommodates the Healthcare Suite and offices for Probation, Offender Management Unit, Throughcare Service (CARATS), Mandatory Drug Testing (MDT), Integrated Drug Strategy Service (IDTS), and a Cardio-Vascular Exercise Suite.
- 3.4 West Kent PCT transferred responsibility for healthcare services to Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2011. The healthcare manager has responsibilities covering Maidstone Prison, East Sutton Park and Blantyre House. An Alcohol Awareness course is run at the prison and men are allowed to attend Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous meetings at the appropriate stage in their sentence. CARAT's assists and supports offenders who have issues surrounding drugs. Men sign a compact agreeing to comply with a drug and alcohol free regime and compliance tests are carried out frequently.
- 3.5 Education is provided by the Manchester College. Resources within the department include two IT suites, a library, art room, workshop and independent classroom facilities.

## **SECTION FOUR**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Particular issues requiring a response:

- 4.1 Please would the Minister investigate the prescribing of opiate-based analgesics within the closed estate, to establish why they are being prescribed inappropriately, without adequate regard to verifying clinical need? These drugs are effective in masking illegal drugs in tests. About 25% of the men arrive at Blantyre House with such a prescription, compared with a usage level of about 1% in the general population. Last year, the figure for Blantyre House was 10%. See 5.3 (v)
- 4.2 Please would the Minister establish why the Parole Board is requesting that Foreign Nationals be placed in the Open estate whilst the UK Borders Agency is regarding them as awaiting deportation? This places the prison in an impossible situation, as it is reluctant to take the risk of offering ROTL (Release on Temporary Licence) to those who are deemed a flight risk. This causes disappointment to the individuals concerned. See 5.1 (ii)
- 4.3 There is a need for counselling for a large number of men who are struggling to come to terms with their past and to cope with the prospect of release, many of whom have served very long sentences. The IMB considers the provision under the contract with the healthcare provider to be totally inadequate, and asks that funding be provided for this service in the belief that it would help to reduce reoffending. See 5.3 (iv)
- 4.4 There has been a substantial shift in the composition of the population which is now about two thirds Lifers and Indeterminate Sentence Prisoners (ISPs). The latter population is without exception post tariff. This remains an unsatisfactory situation.

### **Previous Year's concerns**

- 4.5 Last year, the IMB expressed concerns about the possible untoward effects of the Prisoners' Earnings Act. This continues to create a disincentive to work for a minority of prisoners. Those who want to apply for housing in the private sector are prevented from saving a deposit for their first rental, forcing them to seek housing within the public sector.
- 4.6 The prison continues to manage the risks associated with the challenges of a population which is no longer selected by interview, but sent from other prisons by the Population Management Unit. The problems noted in last year's annual report continue to cause concerns. Vandalism has risen from last year and caused the temporary closure of the Gym, cardiovascular suite and computer rooms at different times. There has been little change in the number of adjudications, whereas last year saw a large increase.

## **SECTION FIVE**

### **5.1 Equality and Inclusion**

(i) There are no significant matters arising in relation to diversity and equality management for this year as evidenced by the fact that there have been no Discrimination Incident Forms, compared to 3 last year (although two related to the same offender). However, the plight of Foreign National prisoners needs to be highlighted.

(ii) There are three Foreign National prisoners at present. This is a new experience for Blantyre House and there is a concern within the Board that their resettlement needs are not being met. There is a lack of consensus within the prison service as to whether these prisoners should be allowed to progress to visits or community work on ROTLs. The management of the prison needs guidance and the Foreign National prisoners need more contact with UKBA to obviate the growing frustration that we observe as a Board.

(iii) Consistent with last year, the Diversity & Equality Action Team (D&EAT) met on a monthly basis with a video link to ESP to discuss matters relating to diversity and equality management. Following the departure of an established Diversity & Equality Manager in December 2011, it was suggested that individual meetings for Blantyre House and ESP should be held separately on a bi-monthly basis to focus on the specific needs of each establishment. It was also suggested that future meetings should be chaired at governor level to demonstrate to external inspection bodies the importance placed upon diversity and equality management.

(iv) These recommendations were implemented in January 2012 and subsequent meetings have enabled governors, officers, specialists and offender representatives to focus on the issues affecting Blantyre House. Historically, there was evidence to suggest that D & EAT meetings were poorly attended and the joint video link format was considered sterile and too formal, leading to a lack of engagement by staff and offenders. Please note that D&EAT meetings are observed by a member of the IMB as an integral part of monitoring.

(v) The last D& EAT meeting for the year was held in May 2012, chaired by a governor with both good staff attendance and active offender participation. It proved to be a highly successful meeting with good engagement, lively discussion and the generation of considerable action points for subsequent follow up; a significant improvement on the sterile meetings at the start of the year.

(vi) Points worthy of mention include the successful implementation of the food preparation issues relating to Ramadan outlined in last year's report, the appointment of a new Chaplain who took up office in January 2012 and the reduction in the Imam's dedicated hours at Blantyre House resulting in Muslim offenders requesting ROTLs (release on temporary licence) for Friday prayers.

(vii) Composition of the population at Blantyre House has been remarkably consistent throughout the year, with the BME grouping of the prison fluctuating in a narrow band between 35% and 37%. The SMART monitoring system continues to indicate that

ROTLs come out under represented for BME offenders but over represented within this grouping for education and the gym. Once again, this is in line with last year's statistics.

(viii) It is hoped that some of the changes to the timetabling of D&EAT meetings and the attention received at governor level will help to ensure the prominence of diversity and equality management in light of the personnel changes during the reporting period.

## **5.2 Education Learning and Skills**

**(i) Educational needs.** Offenders are properly assessed on their basic literacy and numeracy skills and other educational needs. Most offenders have reached Level 2 in literacy and numeracy before they arrive at the prison.

**(ii) Sentence plan.** Offenders' requirements are incorporated into their sentence plans. However, the IMB feel that Sentence Planning Boards should be held earlier in offenders' stay at the prison. They are often held between 6 to 8 weeks after their arrival and some are losing interest in the programmes available. If these boards could be held 2 to 3 weeks after arrival it is felt that offenders would be more committed. Although it has to be said that there is an increasing number of offenders who arrive at Blantyre House with little, or no, interest in resettlement and who are not prepared to take advantage of the benefits offered by the prison in working towards targets.

**(iii) Courses.** The prison continues to offer a good range of courses to enable sentence plans to be followed, including ITQ (Information and Technology Quality), functional skills (including literacy and numeracy), budgeting, business enterprise, self-employment and preparation for work. A "work ready" course has been introduced, although not accredited, concentrating on soft skills such as punctuality, working with others and authority, politeness and smartness of dress. This course lasts six weeks and is run by the work manager liaising with personal officers and progress is reviewed on a weekly basis. This course is aimed in particular at those offenders who are less engaged than others in the programmes offered.

Some offenders attend a library in a local village for taster internet sessions where they can upload their CVs to disc and hone their emailing skills under supervision. In the prison the offenders have access to the software to practise the driving and HGV theory tests.

The painting, decorating, tiling and plastering course, at City and Guilds Level 1, remains popular. There are links with a local education college for offenders to take the Level 2 course. Offenders have asked whether a bricklaying course could be held and the IMB have taken this up with management, but so far it has been told that there are practical and budgetary problems preventing this course being laid on. However, the IMB will continue to press for this course, especially as the current tutor has the necessary skills and is keen to teach it. Offenders working in the kitchen embark on NVQs in catering and also obtain food safety and food hygiene qualifications. Offenders attend colleges for a variety of other courses.

Art is popular and much is produced to a very high standard, which is exemplified by the success enjoyed at the Koestler Awards; however, it is felt that there could be more accreditation in this area.

**(iv). Capacity.** There are normally enough places on courses to accommodate offenders who need them, however, the painting, decorating, tiling and plastering course is often oversubscribed due to the small number of places available (8).

**(v). Failure in attendance.** The IMB is noticing a tendency for offenders to opt to work in the kitchen rather than attending educational courses and it is felt that this requires better liaison and co-operation. In addition we refer to the disengagement mentioned at **(ii)** above

(vi) Timpsons Academy. The opening of the Timpsons training facility has provided an excellent opportunity for applicants from across the region to compete for places on a training programme. This is designed to lead into employment for those who complete the course successfully, and several men from Blantyre House have been employed by Timpsons on release.

### **5.3 Healthcare and Mental Health**

(i) Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust became the prison health service provider on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2011. A new Head of Healthcare was appointed and the service has been maintained by the regular use of bank nurses.

(ii) The IMB has ascertained that new arrivals at Blantyre House are seen promptly in Healthcare. They are assessed and given advice on physical and mental health and diet; referrals can be made to external professionals. The GP holds two surgeries a week and the nurses have open surgeries on other days. The range of services available and waiting times are comparable with those experienced by the public.

(iii) The men are encouraged as part of their rehabilitation to take responsibility for their own health and deal with issues that could harm their ability to live and work in the community. They have the opportunity to live a healthy lifestyle with the emphasis on smoking cessation, drug and alcohol awareness, physical fitness and diet.

(iv) The IMB continues to be very concerned about the lack of counselling provision at BH. Many of the men are coming to the end of long sentences and part of the process of preparing themselves for the future is to come to terms with their past. They may have complex family issues and feelings about their offence and victim. When we see men at their sentence planning boards it is evident how many of them would benefit from seeing a counsellor. The only current provision is to be referred for outside group therapy for six sessions. There is a nine month waiting list, which would not fit with the Sentence Plan. This type of therapy is not suitable for men with a wide range of serious issues from their past.

(v) As noted in the previous annual report, men are arriving at Blantyre House with addictions to prescription drugs, specifically opiate based pain killers. These men are being offered clinical examination to verify their stated complaints, but these are

generally declined. The number of such cases has risen dramatically from last year, and represents approaching 25% of the population.

#### **5.4 Safer Custody**

(i). Although the need for Safer Custody is taken seriously at an individual level by the staff, meetings are haphazard at best, with frequent cancellations.

The problem arises in part from the cross site nature of the prison, the large number of meetings which have to be accommodated within the working week and stretched staff. However, the IMB is critical of the low importance attached to holding Safer Custody meetings, and the lack of attention to the needs of vulnerable prisoners.

(ii). One ACCT document was opened in the year under review. The open nature of the establishment means that the contact between staff and prisoners is such that staff express a high level of confidence in the safety of prisoners. The IMB remains concerned about complacency, as it was last year.

(iii). Staff training in ACCT 5 has not been completed, some prisoners have not had cell sharing assessments and the existence of Samaritan support is poorly advertised.

(iv). There have been a number of reports of bullying during the year, but the IMB is satisfied that these have been responded to adequately.

(v). There was no use of force.

#### **5.5 SEGREGATION**

There is no Segregation Unit at Blantyre House.

#### **5.6 RESIDENTIAL SERVICES**

(i) Accommodation – The rooms at Blantyre House are small and have no heating, but most men welcome the chance to have a room of their own and there are few complaints.

(ii) Catering and Kitchen- A member of the IMB visits the kitchen and dining room every week to monitor the quality and quantity of the food and the cleanliness and hygiene of these areas. In our last report we raised some concerns, but we are pleased to report an overall improvement. New dining room furniture is expected to be installed soon.

Given the budgetary constraints, the Catering Manager and his team are to be congratulated on the variety and quality of the meals served. Special diets are catered for and the heat retaining plates invested in last year mean that the men observing the holy month of Ramadan have a hot meal when they break their fast.

There are few complaints and more compliments in the comment book. We have only received a few verbal complaints and these usually relate to portion size both in the dining room and packed lunches. We always investigate by talking to the kitchen staff or duty governor.

(iii) The gardens and lower compound will supply little produce this year mostly for reasons beyond the control of the prison. The Board do hope that the potential of this area will be recognised in the coming year and put to good use

## **SECTION SIX**

### **Other Areas of the Prison Regime**

#### **6.1 Accommodation on release**

The increasing proportion of Lifers and I.P.P. sentenced prisoners means that more of the process of finding settled accommodation is in the hands of agencies outside the prison - therefore less in the prison's control. However, the exemplary figure of 100% settled accommodation has been achieved, for all of the 54 prisoners released.

#### **6.2 Adjudications**

The board is pleased to note that the prison is improving its recording of both Adjudications and SCRBs, is enhancing the adjudication process through strengthening the role of the Adjudication Liaison Officer, and has recently introduced its own system to monitor the SCRBs

The number is broadly the same as last year, with 37 proved internal adjudications and 4 referred for external adjudication (previously 38 and 7). Although the figures are small, there seems to have been a decrease in the proportion of offences involving controlled drugs detected in the urine, and an increase regarding possession of unauthorised articles.

As a result of better notification by the prison, the board has been able to monitor more of the internal adjudications directly.

#### **Special Circumstances Risk boards (SCRBs)**

During the reporting year, there were 79 SCRBs, one more than last year. The majority followed proved adjudications, but 11 of the total were in response to requests for prisoners to have educational, work or other opportunities slightly before the due time. Not all of these applications were approved.

## SECTION SEVEN

### THE WORK OF THE IMB

<b>BOARD STATISTICS</b>	
Recommended Complement of Board Members	10
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	9
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	9
Number of new members joining within the reporting period	1
Number of members leaving within reporting period	1
Total number of Board meetings during reporting period	12
Total number of visits to the Establishment	295
Total number of segregation reviews held	0
Total number of segregation reviews attended	0
Date of Annual Team Performance Review	13/3/11

<b>Code</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Year 2012</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Year</b>
A	Accommodation				
B	Adjudications				
C	Equality & Diversity (inc religion)				
D	Education/employment/training inc IEP				
E 1	Family/visits inc mail & phone				
E 2	Finance/pay				
F	Food/kitchen related				
G	Health related				
H 1	Property (within current establishment)				
H 2	Property (during transfer/in another establishment)	1			
H 3	Canteen, facilities, Catalogue shopping, Argos				
I	Sentence related (inc. HDC, ROTL, parole, release dates, re-cat etc)				
J	Staff/prisoner/detainee concerns inc bullying				
K	Transfers				
L	Miscellaneous				
	<b>Total number of IMB applications</b>	1			
	Of total: number of IMB Confidential Access was:	0			

